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Spring is in the air, and that can mean only one thing: baseball rights. BROADCASTING & CABLE's annual special report shows cable scoring more games than free TV (page 25). The migration of games to cable can be attributed to several factors, including the growing number of regional cable networks. Whether broadcast or cable, the price of rights continues to climb (page 30). Major League Baseball teams will take in nearly \$342 million from local broadcasters and regional cable networks for the rights to carry the games. What's more, teams will earn millions more through partnerships with local TV outlets or by producing games themselves. A team-by-team scoreboard of who's paying what for rights appears on page 28; the network picture is on page 32, and MLB's plans to bring games to the Web is on page 34.

Cable's batting average keeps climbing

TV stations will present 24% fewer contests than cable this season

By Kim McAvoy

If you're a diehard baseball fan, don't count on your local TV station to deliver all the games you want to see. Many of those games may be on cable.

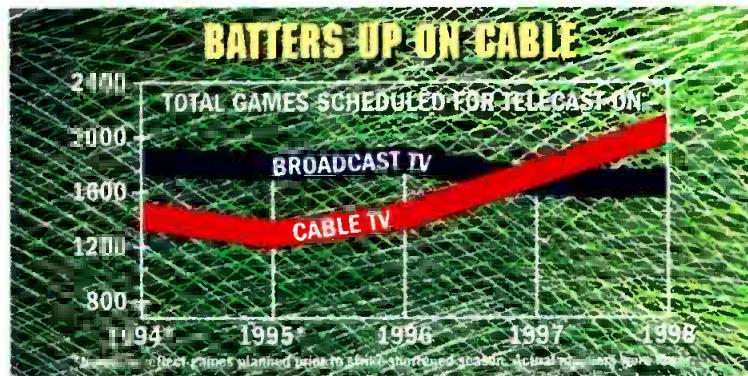
According to BROADCASTING & CABLE's annual local baseball survey, the number of games on broadcast TV has dropped for the second straight year, while those on rival regional cable networks have gone up.

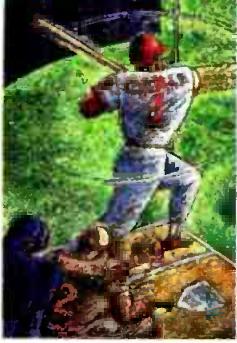
The average number of broadcast games per team has fallen from 65.5 in 1996 to 59.6 in 1997 and to 55.2 in 1998, a 16% decline over

the three seasons. Meanwhile, the average number of cable games has shot up from 50.9 in 1996 to 62 in 1997 to 68.6 in 1998, an increase of nearly 35%.

All told, TV stations plan to broadcast 1,656 games this season, 403—or 24.3%—fewer than the 2,059 games the cable networks have scheduled. Only two seasons ago the positions were reversed: TV stations aired 1,835 games, 411 more than cable networks.

The emergence of The WB and UPN is chiefly responsible for the decrease in over-the-air games. Independent TV stations that once had plenty of time for baseball now have obligations to air network programming. The WB currently offers programming





CABLE CATCHES BROADCAST GAMES

Year	BROADCAST TV		CABLE TV		COMBINED	
	Total games telecast	Average # of telecasts per team	Total games telecast	Average # of telecasts per team	Total games telecast	Average # of telecasts per team
1994*	1,823	65.1	1,432	51.1	3,203	114.4
1995*	1,784	63.7	1,232	45.9	3,016	107.7
1996	1,835	65.5	1,287	50.9	3,259	116.4
1997	1,668	59.6	1,737	62.0	3,405	121.6
1998	1,656	55.2	2,059	68.6	3,715	123.8

* Numbers reflect games planned prior to strike-shortened season. Actual numbers were lower.

on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Sunday night, UPN has Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday night schedules.

The increase in cable games stems primarily from the proliferation of regional cable networks. In 1996, 25 networks televised games; this season, there will be 30 covering the action.

"Once upon a time, Major League Baseball was a real staple for a lot of independent stations," says Jim Hedlund, president of the Association of Local Television Stations.

Hedlund acknowledges that the WB and UPN affiliates aren't as interested in baseball as they once were, but he says that the broadcast-to-cable migration is more complicated than that. "The rights to games have gone through the roof, and at the same time, revenue from beer advertising has gone down. The companies are not spending as much on baseball, so the broadcasters were losing money on it."

With their dual revenue stream—cable affiliate fees and advertising—cable networks can outbid TV stations for rights, adds ALTV's David Donovan. "It's disconcerting. Over time, we are running into a situation where citizens may lose free access to some of these games."

The FCC could help to keep games on TV stations by relaxing the prohibition against one company owning two stations in a market, Donovan says. "To secure local sports rights, we need to have an economic combination that can bid for those rights," he says.

Congress is keeping an eye on the situation. "Senator [John] McCain [R-Ariz.] has always thought that sports migration to cable is unfortunate and that we ought to do what we can to discourage it," says McCain's aide, Mark Buse. "We do not want to end up one day having the Super Bowl and the World Series available only on pay cable."

"If there's one thing that deserves to be on free TV, it's baseball," says Maury Lane, an aide to Sen. Ernest Hollings (D-S.C.).



There are more games on cable primarily because of the growing number of regional cable networks.

Major League Baseball downplays the broadcast-to-cable trend. "There has been an increase in cable games, but that's because there are more cable outlets, and cable allows a team more opportunity to get more games out," says Patrick Courtney, director of media relations, MLB. "You have to take into account what's happened. There are just not as many independent TV stations, and there are now more cable outlets."

Teams whose broadcast TV offerings are taking big hits this season include the Chicago Cubs, Minnesota Twins, Atlanta Braves, Colorado Rockies and Milwaukee Brewers.

The Cubs' over-the-air viewers are perhaps the biggest losers. WGN-TV is moving 50 games to its sister cable network, ChicagoLand TV, leaving the station with 90 over-the-air games instead of the 140 that it broadcast last year.

As the flagship station for the Chicago White Sox, WGN-TV also is cutting back on the number of Sox games, from 60 last year to 51 this season.

"WGN-TV is trying to balance its schedule among Cubs, Sox, late-season Bulls telecasts, an emerging network [The WB], and its regularly scheduled news and entertainment programming," says Peter Walker, vice president and general manager. WGN-TV and the Cubs are owned by Tribune, which also has a stake in the WB network.

Twins fans will have access to only 15 broadcast TV games on KMSP-TV Minneapolis, compared with the 40 carried in 1997 by CBS's WCCO-TV Minneapolis.

WCCO-TV didn't renew its contract with the Twins this season. It had become increasingly difficult to find the time for Twins games, says Jan McDaniel, the station's general manager. Also, the station's contract with the team had expired, and there is a strong possibility that the Twins may relocate, McDaniel says.

CBS Cable's Midwest Sports Channel has a new one-year deal with the Twins for both broadcast and cable rights. Midwest is sublicensing the 15 games to KMSP-TV. Midwest is not, however, increasing its cable games; it is slated to air 105, the same as last season.

The Atlanta Braves' local broadcast TV schedule also faces a sizable reduction of 24 games because of the conver-

LOCAL TV AND RADIO LINEUP

Team	BROADCAST TV						CABLE						RADIO					
	Flagship	# of reg. season	# of stations in net.	Contract yr./yrs.	1998 rights (millions)	1998 est. revenue (millions)	Regional network	# of reg. season	Contract yr./yrs.	1998 rights (millions)	1998 est. revenue (millions)	Flagship	# of stations in net.	Contract yr./yrs.	1998 rights (millions)	1998 est. revenue (millions)		
AMERICAN LEAGUE EAST																		
Baltimore Orioles	WJZ-TV (ch. 13)	37	16	2/4	NA	NA	Home Team Sports	86	2/10	\$20+	NA	WBAL(AM) 1090 khz	25	2/3	\$3.5	NA		
CBS, which owns HTS and WJZ-TV, pays \$20+ million for broadcast TV and cable rights. It sublicenses games to WNUV-TV Baltimore and WBDC-TV Washington.																		
Boston Red Sox	WABU(TV) (ch. 68)	75	12	2/2	\$9+	NA	New England Sports Network	79	16/20	\$6	NA	WEEI(AM) 850 khz	55-60	1/3	\$4.4	NA		
Team owns part of NESN, keeps some of its revenue.																		
New York Yankees	WPIX(TV) (ch. 11)	50	0	NA	NA	NA	MSG Network	100	10/12	\$52.5	NA	WABC(AM) 770 khz	28	2/5	NA	NA		
MSGN pays \$52.5 million for broadcast TV, cable and radio rights; sublicenses 50 games to WPIX.																		
Toronto Blue Jays	CBC	40	0	1/3	\$9	NA	TSN	80	2/5	\$6	NA	CHUM(AM) 1050 khz	32	1/3	\$2	NA		
Headline Sports Radio has radio rights.																		
Tampa Bay Devil Rays	WWBB-TV (ch. 32) WTSP(TV) (ch. 10)	51 15	10	1/5 1/5	NA	\$3-\$5	Sports Channel Florida	64	1/5	\$5	NA	WFLA(AM) 970 khz	17	1/7	\$5	NA		
Team retains broadcast TV rights.																		
AMERICAN LEAGUE CENTRAL																		
Chicago White Sox	WGN-TV (ch. 9)	51	0	1/2	NA	\$13	Fox Sports Chicago	101	15/17	\$4.5	NA	WMVP(AM) 1000 khz	35	3/5	\$3.5	NA		
Team and WGN-TV have revenue-sharing partnership.																		
Cleveland Indians	WJAB(TV) (ch. 43)	75	4	3/3	\$6	NA	Fox Sports Ohio	70	3/3	\$5	NA	WKNR(AM) 1220 khz	35	2/3	NA	\$7.4		
WUAB holds broadcast TV rights; team shares some revenue. Team retains radio rights.																		
Detroit Tigers	WKBD-TV (ch. 50)	40	4	1/5	\$2	NA	Fox Sports Detroit	85	1/2	\$4	NA	WJR(AM) 760 khz	32	3/5	NA	\$3		
Team retains radio rights.																		
Kansas City Royals	KMBC-TV (ch. 9) KCWB(TV) (ch. 29)	15 36	0	NA	NA	NA	Fox Sports Rocky Mountain	30	2/3	\$4-\$5	NA	KMBZ(AM) 980 khz	100	1/3	\$1.8	NA		
Fox Sports Rocky Mountain pays \$4-\$5 million for broadcast and cable rights; buys time on KMBC-TV, which controls KCWB through local marketing agreement.																		
Minnesota Twins	KMSP-TV (ch. 9)	15	0	NA	NA	NA	Midwest Sports Channel	105	1/1	\$5	NA	WCCO(AM) 830 khz	70	1/1	NA	\$1-\$2		
CBS Cable's Midwest Sports Channel pays \$5 million for broadcast TV and cable rights. Midwest sublicenses 15 games to KMSP-TV. Team and WCCO(AM) have revenue-sharing arrangement.																		
AMERICAN LEAGUE WEST																		
Anaheim Angels	KCAL-TV (ch. 9)	44	0	3/5	NA	\$11.2	Fox Sports West	40	4/5	\$5	NA	KRLA(AM) 1110 khz	8	1/5	NA	\$8		
Disney, which owns team, retains broadcast TV rights, sharing revenue with KCAL. Team retains radio rights.																		
Oakland Athletics	KRON-TV (ch. 4)	30	2	1/2	\$4	NA	Fox Sports Bay Area	57	2/7	\$6	NA	KNEW(AM) 910 khz	15	1/2	NA	\$3.5		
Team retains radio rights.																		
Seattle Mariners	KIRO-TV (ch. 7) KSTW(TV) (ch. 11)	41 23	5	1/3	\$5	NA	Fox Sports Northwest	60	2/4	\$4-\$5	NA	KIRO(AM) 710 khz	38	1/5	\$3.7	NA		
KIRO-TV holds broadcast TV rights.																		
Texas Rangers	KTX-TV (ch. 39) KIAS-TV (ch. 5)	80 15	12-14	3/5	\$7	NA	Fox Sports Southwest	60	NA	NA	NA	KRLD(AM) 1080 khz	70	1/3	\$4.5	NA		
LIN Television, owned by Hicks Muse, has broadcast and cable rights and operates KTX-TV; sublicenses 60 games to Fox. Tom Hicks is purchasing the Rangers.																		

NA—Not applicable or not available. Unless otherwise indicated, the teams sell the rights to a broadcast station or cable network and the 1997 rights fee is shown. In cases where the team retains the rights or is involved in a partnership, estimated 1998 revenue is shown instead of a rights fee. Depending on the team, contract status refers to a rights contract, partnership contract or contract for a non-rightsholder to carry the games. In most cases, broadcast TV and radio rightsholders form regional networks—the column shows the number of stations in those networks. Radio stations usually carry all regular-season games.

Cover Story

Team	BROADCAST TV						CABLE						RADIO					
	Flagship	# of reg. season	# of stations in net.	Contract yr./yrs.	1998 rights (millions)	1998 est. revenue (millions)	Regional network	# of reg. season	Contract yr./yrs.	1998 rights (millions)	1998 est. revenue (millions)	Flagship	# of stations in net.	Contract yr./yrs.	1998 rights (millions)	1998 est. revenue (millions)		
NATIONAL LEAGUE EAST																		
Atlanta Braves	WTBS(TV) (ch. 17) WUPA(TV) (ch. 69)	90 11	0 0	NA	NA	\$40	Fox Sports South	45	2/10	\$4	NA	WSB(AM) 750 kHz	175	4/5	\$3	NA		
Revenue reflects simultaneous national carriage of games on TBS. WTBS buys airtime from WUPA(TV). Team and WTBS are owned by Turner Broadcasting System.																		
Florida Marlins	WBFS-TV (ch. 33)	60	5	1/5	NA	\$8	Sports Channel Florida	70	1/7	\$5	NA	WOAM(AM) 560 kHz	20	2/5	\$3.5	NA		
Team and WBFS-TV have revenue-sharing agreement. Marlins owner Wayne Huizenga owns 70% of Sports Channel Florida.																		
Montreal Expos	SRC(FR) TQS(FR)	20 20	18 9	4/4 4/4	NA	\$2.6	RDS(FR) TSN(ENG)	40 25	3/4	\$1.8	NA	CIOQ(AM) CKAC(AM)	5 Eng 26 Fr	4/4 2/5	NA	\$1.3		
Team retains all broadcast TV and radio rights; stations sell some inventory. Expos keep all radio ad revenue.																		
New York Mets	WWOR-TV (ch. 9)	50	NA	2/2	NA	\$16	Fox Sports New York	100	12/30	\$13+	NA	WFAN(AM) 660 kHz	15	1/2	\$3.5	NA		
Team and WWOR-TV have revenue-sharing partnership. WADO(AM) will broadcast 98 games in Spanish.																		
Philadelphia Phillies	WPHL-TV (ch. 17)	73	1	1/1	NA	\$7	Comcast Sports Network	80	1/1	NA	\$4.5	WPHT(AM) 1210 kHz	18-20	1/1	NA	\$3		
Team and WPHL-TV have revenue-sharing partnership for broadcast TV, radio and cable. Phillies partnered with Comcast Cable to form Comcast Sports Network.																		
NATIONAL LEAGUE CENTRAL																		
Chicago Cubs	WGN-TV (ch. 9)	90	0	NA	NA	\$32	ChicagoLand TV	62	NA	NA	\$5	WGN(AM) 720 kHz	46	NA	NA	\$12		
Tribune owns team, WGN-AM-TV and Chicagoland TV. Revenue reflects simultaneous national carriage of games on superstation WGN.																		
Cincinnati Reds	WSTR-TV (ch. 64) WKRC (ch. 12)	30 15	10	NA	NA	NA	Fox Sports Ohio	50	3/3	\$5	NA	WLW(AM) 700 kHz	50	1/3	\$3.5	NA		
Fox Sports Ohio pays \$5 million for broadcast TV and cable rights. It buys airtime on TV stations.																		
Houston Astros	KNWS-TV (ch. 51)	60	8-12	NA	NA	NA	Fox Sports Southwest	65	1/8	\$10+	NA	KILT(AM) 610 kHz	50	3/3	NA	\$4+		
Fox Sports Southwest pays \$10+ million for broadcast TV and cable rights. Team retains radio rights. KXYZ(AM) is Spanish-language flagship station.																		
Milwaukee Brewers	WCGV-TV (ch. 24)	50	0	NA	NA	NA	Midwest Sports Channel	80	1/6	\$5.3	NA	WTMJ(AM) 620 kHz	52	1/5	\$2-\$3	NA		
CBS Cable's Midwest Sports Channel pays \$5.3 million for broadcast TV and cable rights; team shares some revenue. WTMJ has radio rights; team shares some revenue.																		
Pittsburgh Pirates	WPGH-TV (ch. 53) WCWB-TV (ch. 22)	8 7	0	NA	NA	NA	Fox Sports Pittsburgh	70	2/4	\$3	NA	KDKA(AM) 1020 kHz	45	2/3	NA	\$3		
Fox Sports Pittsburgh pays \$3 million for broadcast TV and cable rights, sublicenses 15 games to TV stations. Team retains radio rights.																		
St. Louis Cardinals	KPLR-TV (ch. 11)	60	21	2/3	NA	\$5+	Fox Sports Midwest	50	2/5	\$2-3	NA	KMOX(AM) 1120 kHz	107	2/5	\$5	NA		
Team has revenue-sharing arrangement with KPLR-TV.																		
NATIONAL LEAGUE WEST																		
Colorado Rockies	KWGN-TV (ch. 2)	75	12	1/5	NA	NA	Fox Sports Rocky Mountain	50	2/10	10+	NA	KOA(AM) 850 kHz	62	2/5	\$4.5	NA		
Fox Sports Rocky Mountain pays \$10+ million for broadcast TV and cable rights. Fox buys airtime on KWGN-TV.																		
Los Angeles Dodgers	KTLA(TV) (ch. 5)	48	0	2/5	\$15.5	NA	Fox Sports West 2	40	NA	NA	NA	KXTA(AM) 1150 kHz	25	1/5	\$6-8	NA		
KTLA(TV) pays \$15.5 million for broadcast TV and cable rights. It sublicenses games to Fox Sports West 2. Fox has purchased the Dodgers.																		
San Diego Padres	KUSI-TV (ch. 51)	23	0	NA	NA	NA	Channel 4	100	2/5	\$5	NA	KFMB(AM) 790 kHz	6	2/3	\$3.5	NA		
Cox Communications' Channel 4 pays \$5 million for broadcast TV and cable rights, buys air time on KUSI-TV. Cox keeps all ad revenue.																		
San Francisco Giants	KTVU(TV) (ch. 2)	58	5	4/6	\$5.5	NA	Fox Sports Bay Area	55	3/5	\$4.5	NA	KNBR(AM) 680 kHz	15	5/5	\$4.5	NA		
Team retains five to seven 30-second spots per game on broadcast TV. KTVU(TV) parent Cox Communications is limited partner in the team.																		
Arizona Diamondbacks	KTVK(TV) (ch. 3)	75	4	1/10	NA	\$10+	Fox Sports Arizona	60	1/10	\$5+	NA	KTAR(AM) 620 kHz	16	1/10	NA	\$4+		
Team retains broadcast TV and radio rights. Team and KTVK have revenue-sharing arrangement. KDRX-TV will broadcast 30 games in Spanish. Fox pays \$5+ million for cable rights but team also gets four minutes advertising time. KPHX(AM) will broadcast all home games in Spanish.																		



sion of WTBS(TV) Atlanta from a superstation—a local station with national cable distribution—to a local station and a separate cable network. In approving the deal, MLB required owner Turner Broadcasting System to reduce the number of games WTBS and the network will simultaneously televise from 125 to 90. However, Turner is restoring 11 games for Atlanta's broadcast audience by buying time on WUPA(TV) Atlanta. It also is placing 20 games on Fox Sports South, giving the cable network 45 games, compared with 25 in 1997.

The Colorado Rockies are scaling back from 95 to 75 broadcast TV games this season. The 75 games will be carried on WB affiliate KWGN-TV. Fox Sports Rocky Mountain—which has the broadcast TV and cable rights—will air 50 games, a big jump from the seven carried last season. According to a Rockies spokesperson, last year's cable

package was small because Fox Sports Rocky Mountain secured the rights late in the season.

In Milwaukee, the number of Brewers' over-the-air games is falling from 68 to 50. But CBS's Midwest Sports Channel, which has the broadcast and cable TV rights, is offering cable viewers more than twice the games aired last year—80, compared with 35.

"Ideally, we would like our games to be both on cable and over-the-air so that everybody could pick us up," says Tim Van Wagoner, director of broadcasting for the Brewers. "But it's a continuing battle to get stations to clear a lot of games ... not because they don't want to but [because] they have other commitments. Cable is the way to go."

More modest declines are expected for the Philadelphia Phillies (84 to 73), Anaheim Angels (51 to 44) and Florida Marlins (69 to 60).

"We are very reluctant to preempt the network," says John McGuiness, vice president and director of sports marketing for WB affiliate WPHL-TV Philadelphia, which airs the Phillies games. He says that the station wants to hold on to

Diamond prices hit \$342 million

By Kim McAvoy

Major League Baseball continues to be a hot property for local broadcasters and regional cable networks.

That's why the TV and radio industry shelled out nearly \$342 million for the rights to carry Major League Baseball games this season, according to BROADCASTING & CABLE's annual survey. (Last year, MLB teams received roughly \$320 million in rights fees.)

Furthermore, many teams will earn millions more through partnerships with local TV outlets or by producing games and selling the ad time themselves. Revenue from such ventures should reach \$200 million.

However, the Atlanta Braves and the Chicago Cubs, each of which previously generated \$50 million or more in ad revenue, may not do that well this season because the number of broadcast TV games has been significantly reduced (see story, page 25).

This season, the addition of the Arizona Diamondbacks and the Tampa Bay Devil Rays to the league has increased the rights pot by \$15 million.

Both teams have struck deals that include a mix of rights fees and revenue-sharing arrangements.

The Diamondbacks, for example, kept their broadcast TV and radio rights, expecting to bring in advertising revenue of more than \$14 million. The team and KTVK(TV) Phoenix, which will air 75 games, also have a



The Arizona Diamondbacks did not sell the rights to their games. They expect to earn more than \$14 million in ad revenue.

revenue-sharing arrangement. Fox Sports Arizona paid more than \$5 million for the cable rights, but the team also gets four minutes of advertising time.

In Florida, the Devil Rays received \$5 million in rights fees from Sports Channel Florida and another \$5 million from WFLA(AM) Tampa. The team held on to its broadcast TV rights and anticipates revenue of \$3 million—\$5 million.

On the regional cable network front, Fox Sports Net continues to dominate. Through its 12 owned-and-operated networks and 12 affiliated networks, it has the rights to 24 of 30 MLB teams. Three of Fox's owned-and-operated networks hold both the broadcast TV and the cable rights, including Fox Sports Southwest, which paid more than \$10 million this season for the rights to the Houston Astros games. Others that have all TV

rights are Fox Sports Rocky Mountain (Kansas City Royals and Colorado Rockies games), and Fox Sports Pittsburgh (Pirates games).

Also aggressively pursuing MLB rights this season is CBS Cable's Midwest Sports Channel, which paid \$5 million for all TV rights to the Minnesota Twins for one year. And Midwest has a six-year deal for \$5.3 million for the Milwaukee Brewers broadcast TV and cable games; the team shares some revenue.

The most lucrative local deal: the \$52.5 million that Madison Square Garden Network paid the New York Yankees for broadcast TV, radio and cable rights.

AP Photo / Jason Wise



as many games as it can. "We don't want to lose our local identity with the team ... but we have to honor our network commitments."

Still, some teams will increase their broadcast TV games: New York Yankees (40 to 50), Pittsburgh Pirates (10 to 15), Toronto Blue Jays (35 to 40) and Cleveland Indians (70 to 75).

In many cases, over-the-air games are split between two broadcasters to accommodate a hefty schedule. That's how it works in Pittsburgh, where WPGH-TV carries eight Pirates games and WCWB-TV has seven. Cincinnati Reds broadcast TV games are divided between WSTR-TV, with 30, and WKRC-TV, with 15.

Last year, KIRO-TV, as a UPN affiliate, could accommodate 65 Seattle Mariners games. Its new affiliation deal with

CBS, however, doesn't allow it to preempt the network, says John Woodin, vice president and general manager. Therefore, this season the station—the broadcast TV rightsholder—is buying time on KSTW-TV Seattle to air 23 games, while KIRO-TV itself will carry 41. "A partnership makes sense," says Woodin. Moreover, it is important to the station not to lose the Mariners. They are the highest-rated local baseball team; last year, on average, the games received a 16 rating, Woodin reports.

For many broadcasters, perhaps, airing fewer baseball games is the way to go. That's OK with CBS affiliate WTSP-TV Tampa, Fla., which is airing 15 Tampa Bay Devil Rays games this season. "We made a small commitment. We're very excited about it," says Steve Mauldin, president and general manager of the station. Carrying such a small package doesn't create preemption problems, Mauldin says, and it gives WTSP an opportunity to participate in sports. ■

Broadcast, cable nets ready to play ball

Nation's pastime appears on Fox, NBC, ESPN, FX, Fox Sports Net



Tim McCarver, Joe Buck and Bob Brenly will cover 1998 World Series action for Fox.

By Joe Schlosser

Fox Broadcasting, which now owns the Los Angeles Dodgers, holds the majority of national and regional broadcast rights to Major League Baseball games.

Between the Fox broadcast network, Fox Sports Net and cable's FX, Rupert Murdoch has nearly all the bases covered.

NBC and ESPN make up the rest of Major League Baseball's five-year \$1.7 billion contract that expires after the 1999-2000 baseball season.

Last season, FX and Fox Sports Net

entered MLB's national coverage package, signing a four-year deal worth \$1.7 billion. This season FX will carry a 26-week package of Saturday night games, while Fox Sports Net has a national Thursday night game.

The Fox broadcast network is entering the third year of its \$575 million five-year deal. The network has an 18-week schedule of weekend games (including *The Game of the Week*) this season and will broadcast the National League Championship Series and the World Series. Fox also has the rights to the 2000 World Series.

NBC, which paid \$475 million for its



package, carries the All-Star Game and American League championship series this season. NBC has the World Series in 1999 and the All-Star Game again in 2000.

ESPN acquired its Wednesday and Sunday night MLB coverage for \$455 million and will carry six to twelve division series playoff games in the fall. ■



MLB still planning regular Webcasts

Same play, different season

By Richard Tedesco

Major League Baseball plans to present several audio Webcasts of games on its site beginning early this season. The numbers of games carried will increase as pennant races peak.

That is not unlike the game plan that MLB executives outlined last season, but the deal to make baseball audiocasts proliferate online never came to pass. But it will happen this year, according to Alex Kam, MLB's director of new media, who says he hopes to have a deal in place soon for audio of "several key games a day" to be accessible on the MLB site.

Along with the Webcasts in RealAudio and other formats, the MLB site will

give fans access to star players in daily mid-afternoon chats as well as other exclusive features. "Major League Baseball will offer a new set of experiences [online]," Kam says. "What we're going to offer fans is something they cannot find on any other site."

Several big-league ball clubs already have gone after the Web audience of displaced and office-bound hometown fans. They include the Baltimore Orioles, Houston Astros, Texas Rangers, Seattle Mariners, Chicago White Sox, San Francisco Giants and Kansas City Royals. Teams can provide links to audiocasts on their own sites or through sites of their local radio carriers.

AudioNet acted as host for some MLB teams' Webcasts last season and is considered a leading candidate as an



Internet partner for MLB. But Kam indicates that MLB also was open to some form of partnership deal with a sports Web designer—such as Starwave—if such a deal could be struck.

The bottom line is that opening day is near for a sport that needs to get the attention of fans through every possible medium. Kam recently joined MLB from a similar position at HBO; one of his main priorities in his new job is to strike a deal with a Web technology partner.

The other priority is to pump as many audiocasts onto the MLB site over the course of the season as possible, according to Kam.

Digital Broadcasting. What's possible, what's real, what's next,

what's stopping you from finding out?

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Hopefully nothing. Because on April 6th at 11:00 a.m. in the Sands Convention Center, Ron Whittier will be giving the 1998 NAB Multimedia World Keynote Address. His speech will be on "Digital



Broadcasting Interactivity: What's Possible. What's Real. What's Next." After the speech, drop by Intel's booth M8263 to see the technology. We're positive something will stop you.

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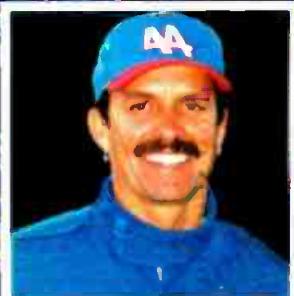
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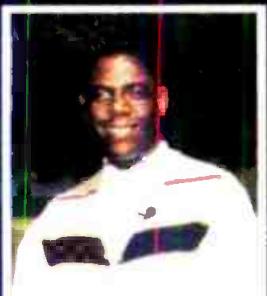
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